

together to protect our children from violence, including taking efforts to keep guns away from children and away from criminals. The question is whether Congress will write that national consensus into law or block it. Thus far, the Senate has not fully lived up to its responsibility.

I am very pleased that on Wednesday a bipartisan majority in the Senate passed two important measures I proposed 2 weeks ago. First, they agreed to ban the import of high-capacity ammunition clips that are used to evade the 1994 ban on assault weapons. Second, they agreed to ban juvenile possession of semi-automatic assault weapons and large-capacity magazines, weapons used—designed only for mayhem. There's no good reason for a child to own an AK-47 or a 15-round ammo clip.

I applaud the Senate for taking these two steps. However, on Wednesday a narrow majority squandered an important opportunity to close the gun show loophole through which tens of thousands of guns are sold each year without background checks. Yesterday I called on the Senate to reconsider that vote. It makes no sense to let criminals continue to use legitimate gun shows as a convenience store for their weapons.

Today the Senate will vote again on a measure purporting to address this issue. However, the new Senate Republican bill is still riddled with high-caliber loopholes. It won't stop criminals from buying guns at gun shows. At the same time, it will open up a new pawn shop loophole that lets convicted felons get guns at a local pawn shop. That's actually worse than current law.

I simply can't believe the Senate will make the same mistake twice. So once again, I ask them to reject this phony proposal and to pass real legislation that requires the background checks necessary to prevent criminals from buying guns at gun shows which they cannot buy at gun stores. This should be a moment for national unity.

I was so pleased today to receive a letter from the major gun manufacturers reiterating their support for our efforts to pass real, enforceable, mandatory background checks at gun shows. They recognize that law-abiding citizens don't need a gun show loophole, only criminals do.

For 6 years, we have made strong, steady progress against crime by elevating results over ideology. Today we have a chance to put aside partisanship, political divisions, and draw special interest power that has dominated our politics on this issue for too long. For the sake of our children, I hope the Senate changes its mind and does the right thing.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:45 a.m. in the South Portico at the White House.

Remarks in a Telephone Conversation With Americans at Camp Hope, Albania

May 14, 1999

Maj. Gen. William Hinton. Hello, Mr. President. This is General Bill Hinton from Camp Hope in Albania.

The President. Hi, General Hinton. And are you there with Mr. Sykes?

Maj. Gen. Hinton. Yes, Mr. Chris Sykes is here with me from CARE.

The President. Well, first of all, I just wanted to call to applaud your efforts in building and managing Camp Hope. I think it's a very important example of our commitment to give shelter and assistance to the refugees until they can go home. And I'm very proud you were able to do it in such a short time. I know you had a lot of constraints finding the right site and getting the infrastructure up. I think this will help us to get our NATO Allies to do more on other camps as well.

How are you doing with the rest of the work there?

Maj. Gen. Hinton. Sir, the work is coming along very well. We're progressing with the rest of the camp, and we hope to complete the camp for up to 20,000—

[At this point, the telephone connection was interrupted.]

Maj. Gen. Hinton. —hello, Mr. President. Are you there?

The President. Yes.

Maj. Gen. Hinton. In any case, we hope to complete the rest of the camp by the first of June.

The President. That's great. Well, it's good to talk to you again. I hope you will tell all the people in Joint Task Force Shining Hope that I'm very grateful for a job well done.

Maj. Gen. Hinton. Mr. Sykes is here, sir, and of course, he already has 400 refugees on board.

Chris Sykes. How are you, Mr. President?

The President. I'm fine.

Mr. Sykes. Okay. It's been a great exercise—

The President. Well, I really appreciate the way you've worked with our military to organize and design the camp. And I want to thank CARE and all the NGO's that are working there.

Exactly how many are there now?

Mr. Sykes. We've got exactly 409 now, and we'll be receiving another 500, which we're in the process of receiving as you speak.

The President. Well, that's good news. I think it's good for them—go ahead.

Mr. Sykes. Yes—we're moving right ahead on schedule, and we should be able to speed up our rate of reception. The initial influx has come in from Kukes, and we're prepared for any influx from Macedonia, as well.

The President. Well, that's great. I think we may have a little influx from Macedonia. The situation there is not the best, and we've got a lot of pressure. So I hope we can really do a good job of getting as many people as possible there.

Mr. Sykes. Well, sir, we'll keep this camp going on schedule, and we're looking for sites for two more camps right now.

The President. That's great. I know they need all the help they can get. They've taken a lot of folks, and I know a lot of them are in homes, but I think from here on out we're going to have to have more camps and good ones.

Mr. Sykes. Yes, sir. We've got a good contractor here helping to build these camps and we'll keep trying to find the right sites.

The President. Well, I appreciate it. I know it's tough work, but you're doing something really important. And it will be temporary, but it may be a while. And so we've

got to do the best we can. And I'm very grateful to both of you.

Mr. Sykes. Thank you, sir.

The President. Thank you, Chris, and thank you, General. It's good to hear your voice. Take care.

Maj. Gen. Hinton. Thank you, thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Bye-bye.

NOTE: The teleconference began at 9:40 a.m. The President spoke from the Oval Office at the White House to Maj. Gen. William S. Hinton, Jr., USAF, Commander, Joint Task Force Shining Hope, and Chris Sykes, camp manager, CARE, at the Camp Hope refugee site, located 60 miles from the city of Fier, Albania.

Statement on Senate Action on Gun Control Legislation

May 14, 1999

I am deeply disappointed that, by the narrowest of margins, the Senate has refused to close the gun show loophole while creating other dangerous loopholes to our gun laws. If the Senate's decision is left to stand, it will be easier for criminals to get guns and harder for law enforcement to do its job. Criminals will be able to get guns at gun shows and pawn shops, no questions asked, and Federal law enforcement won't be able to ensure gun sellers' compliance with laws or to trace firearms later used in crimes. If the Senate wants to do right by the American people, it will once again bring up the Lautenberg amendment, when all Members are present, and close the gun show loophole once and for all.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.
